

First Congregational United Church of Christ

*Empowered by the Holy Spirit and with the help of God,
we open our doors and hearts to all, in service and love as modeled by Jesus Christ.*



*Fifth Sunday of Easter
The Season of Eastertide*

*The Lord's Day
Fifth Sunday of Easter
The Season of Eastertide
Nine o'clock in the Morning*

The Worship of God

Worship is the submission of all our nature to God. It is the quickening of the conscience by God's holiness; the nourishment of the mind with God's truth; the purifying of the imagination by God's beauty; the opening of the heart to God's love; the surrender of the will to God's purpose—all of this gathered up in adoration.

~William Temple

The Prologue

Love is hospitality! Hospitality is love! The epistle writer of I John waxes eloquent about love, admonishing his reader to be loving. Love is in the very DNA, perhaps the very DNA, of the gospel, defining what it means to be a Christian. If it is not loving, it is not of Christ, the Spirit nowhere to be found anywhere within it. The Johannine letter writer, in this profound correspondence to this early Christian community, implores followers of Jesus to share divine love, agape, with fellow brothers and sisters, and of course, that means loving neighbor as God and vice versa, even as we likewise fall in love with ourselves. In the book of Acts we read the wonderful story about Philip and the Ethiopian eunuch, a hospitably loving welcoming and inclusive text that would have been understood as scandalous, radical beyond any acceptable degree. Perhaps, for many Christians today, an honest reading of this story, sadly, still has the same negative affect!

Gathering Music

The Proclamation

An Ancient Easter Acclamation

Alleluia! Christ is risen!

The Lord is risen indeed! Alleluia!

The Call to Worship and Welcome

The Spirit of the still speaking God be with you.

And also with you.

The Music for Contemplation

The Lighting of the Altar Candles

The Gathering

Give praise to God in the great congregation! Let all who seek the Holy One render praise in this sacred vineyard!

We gather before the One in whom we abide, the vine grower who abides in us as the true vine, celebrating Christ Jesus our risen Lord!

Turn to the Holy One this day! Come and worship the source of love, the One who loves us unconditionally!

Our hearts are filled with rejoicing as we bow before the One who is the essence of love, the perfect embodiment of all that is loving!

Let us worship God!

The Introit, No. 146 (*Chalice Praise*)

Love Is

Stephen Reinhardt

The Collect

Let us pray to the Lord,

Loving God, we have gathered as the great congregation in this place to worship the One whose love abides in our hearts, to proclaim the good news about Christ Jesus, the risen one; we long to abide in you, even as you abide in us; teach us to love one another, God of excessively and “extravagantly welcoming” love, even as you love us unconditionally; may your Holy Spirit abide with us in this place as we offer our praise to you; all this we pray through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the holy and still speaking Spirit, one God, now and forever.

Amen.

*The Opening Hymn, No. 517 *Love Divine, All Loves Excelling*

BEECHER

*The Litany of Praise

Render praise in the midst of the great congregation! Let all who seek after God praise the Lord in this sacred vineyard!

Our hearts shall live forever with the Holy, praising God for all eternity!

Everyone from the ends of the earth shall remember and turn to the Lord! All the families of the nations shall worship God!

For dominion belongs to God! The Holy One rules over the nations!

All who sleep on the earth will bow down before God! All who go down to the dust will bow before the Holy!

We shall live for God always, telling of the Holy One to future generations! We will forever proclaim God’s deliverance to a people yet to be born! Praise the Lord!

*The Gloria

GREATOREX

*Glory to the Creator, and to the Christ, and to the Comforter!
As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be,
World without end! Amen! Amen!*

The Call to Confession¹

Sense the love of God that seeks to live in us. Remember the times you have felt connected to the true vine, Christ Jesus, the risen One. Listen again to this promise and challenge: If you abide in me and my words abide in you, ask for whatever you wish, and it will be done for you . . . bear much fruit and become my disciples. In the sacred silence and stillness of our moments together, let us confess before the Holy.

The Silent Confession

The Corporate Confession²

Let us pray to the Lord,

Loving God, sometimes we have ignored our origin in you and denied your rule over the nations. On occasion, we have pursued illusions of self-interest rather than abiding in your love. Oft times, we have turned away from brothers and sisters as if they were enemies to be hated, afraid to love those who differ from us or those whom we perceive to have the power to harm us. Often, we hesitate to take the risks of caring for fear that we may be hurt in the process. Discipleship seems too demanding. God of love, release us from our fears and failures to trust your love and live with bold generosity.

The Assurance of Pardon³

Beloved faith community, hear the good news of Eastertide! There is grace for all who sincerely repent and seek a living, growing relationship with God. Those who are open to the gift of the love of God are blessed with the capacity to extend love to others and thus experience the depth and richness of life and love that God intends for us. When we love one another, the love of God is perfected within us.

Thanks be to God!

The Time for the Children

Joy Turpin

The Witness from the Christian Scriptures

ACTS 8:26-40

Then an angel of the Lord said to Philip, "Get up and go toward the south to the road that goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza." (This is a wilderness road.) So, he got up and went. Now there was an Ethiopian eunuch, a court official of the Candace, the queen of the Ethiopians, in charge of her entire treasury. He had come to Jerusalem to worship and was returning home. Seated in his chariot, he was reading the prophet Isaiah. Then the Spirit said to Philip, "Go over to this chariot and join it!" So, Philip ran up to it and heard him reading the prophet Isaiah. He asked, "Do you understand what you are reading?" He replied, "How can I, unless someone guides me?" And he invited Philip to get in and sit beside him. Now the passage of the scripture that he was reading was this: "Like a sheep he was led to the slaughter, and like a lamb silent before its shearer, so he does not open his mouth. In his humiliation justice was denied him. Who can describe his generation? For his life is taken away from the earth." The eunuch asked Philip, "About whom, may I ask you, does the prophet say this, about himself or about

someone else?” Then Philip began to speak and starting with this scripture he proclaimed to him the good news about Jesus. As they were going along the road, they came to some water, and the eunuch said, “Look, here is water! What is to prevent me from being baptized?” He commanded the chariot to stop, and both of them, Philip and the eunuch, went down into the water, and Philip baptized him. When they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord snatched Philip away! The eunuch saw him no more and went on his way rejoicing! But Philip found himself at Azotus, and as he was passing through the region, he proclaimed the good news to all the towns until he came to Caesarea.

Listen to what the Spirit of the still speaking God is saying!
Thanks be to God!

The Response, PSALM 22:25-31

KINGSFOLD

*We come with praise before the Lord, release us from all strife!
The poor will feast at tables full and find eternal life!
The far-flung concerns of the earth shall turn to God and sing!
And nations of the world shall rise to hail the Lord as king!*

*The mighty on their knees will bow! As mortals, they discern
that, as from dust God gave them breath, to dust they shall return!
Descendants of the coming years who walk the paths well-trod
will sing to children yet unborn the might acts of God!*

The Witness from the Epistles

I JOHN 4:7-21

Beloved, let us love one another, because love is from God! Everyone who loves is born of God and knows God! Whoever does not love does not know God, for God is love! God’s love was revealed among us in this way: God sent the only Son into the world so that we might live through him. In this is love, not that we loved God but that God loved us and sent the Son to be the atoning sacrifice for our sins. Beloved, since God loved us so much, we also ought to love one another. No one has ever seen God! If we love one another, God abides in us, and God’s love is perfected in us. By this we know that we abide in God and God in us, because God has given us of God’s Spirit. And we have seen and do testify that the Father has sent the Son as the Savior of the world. God abides in those who confess that Jesus is the Son of God, and they abide in God. So, we have known and believe the love that God has for us. God is love, and those who abide in love abide in God, and God abides in them. Love has been perfected among us in this: that we may have boldness on the day of judgment, because as God is, so are we in this world. There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear! For fear has to do with punishment, and whoever fears has not reached perfection in love. We love because God first loved us. Those who say, “I love God,” and hate a brother or sister are liars, for those who do not love a brother or sister, whom they have seen, cannot love God, whom they have not seen. The commandment we have from God is this: those who love God must love their brothers and sisters also!

Listen to what the Spirit of the still speaking God is saying!
Thanks be to God!

The Sermon

Eunuch Love!

Timothy W. Shirley

The Hymn for Eastertide, No. 233 *Alleluia! Sing to Jesus*

HYFRYDOL

The Concerns of the Church

The Pastoral Prayer

The Lord's Prayer

**Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name.
Thy kingdom come! Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread and
forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors.
And lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil.
For Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory forever!
Amen.**

The Receiving of Our Gifts

The Offertory

*The Doxology

OLD HUNDREDTH

*Praise God, from whom all blessings flow!
Praise Christ all creatures here below!
Praise Holy Spirit, evermore!
Praise triune God whom we adore!*

*The Prayer of Thanksgiving

*The Closing Hymn, No. 526

The Gift of Love

GIFT OF LOVE

*The Extinguishing of the Altar Candles

*The Procession of the Light

*The Benediction and Blessing

To our guests! At your choosing, we invite you to join us in a long-standing tradition at First Congregational United Church of Christ as we form a circle, joining hands and singing together our Fellowship Song.

*The Fellowship Song

Let There Be Peace on Earth

WORLD PEACE

*Let there be peace on earth, and let it begin with me.
With every step I take, let this be my joyous creed.
To take each moment and live each moment in peace, eternally!
Let there be peace on earth, and let it begin with me.*

The Music for Reflection

*You are invited to stand as you are able.

Lector: Doug Malinsky

Ushers: Susan Krivichi and Joe Turpin

*The color for Easter Day, the Resurrection of the Lord,
and for the Season of Eastertide is White, symbolizing purity and victory, and
reminding us of Jesus' victory over death on the cross and his glorious resurrection.*

***The flowers adorning the Chancel for worship today are given
by Tobi and Mark Johannsen in honor of Timothy W. Shirley on completion
of his PhD from the University of Pretoria, South Africa.***

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First Congregational UCC - Eagle River, WI

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